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Mr. R. J. Coady.

Dear Sir:

I have your letter of June 12th, and it has struck a responsive chord.

As much as I would like to, I cannot write for general publication. The desire is there, but my training is more or less against it. My work hardly calls for the expression of any novel ideas, most of it being the presentation of the same or similar ideas in various ways, chiefly written to catch and hold the attention of the desultory reader, and as such, these writings can never be intensive.

However, because of my sympathy with your work, I feel that I owe you a response, even if it be of a personal nature.

I, too, have had the vision—and perhaps have lost it in the press of circumstances.

But it will not down.

One of the earliest and most pleasureable realizations I have had of the beauty of things and akin to the mechanical, occurred in my high school days. It happened that my way to the Mathematics Class (a way which was not always a path of roses), led past a long row of plaster replicas of the bas relief from a Parthenon—you must recall them—the proud, highbred procession of the Athenian Youths. I was held by the beauty, the grace, and poise of these equestrian figures—(and almost obtained a black mark for tardiness through my spell-bound admiration). However, I entered the Math Class.

An intricate proposition in solid geometry was displayed on the blackboard. The conventional recitation and proof followed. But what impressed me was the attitude of the instructor. Like one inspired he asked a naturally inappreciative class of young barbarians if this "was not a beautiful demonstration." He said it was "almost a symphony, a poem." As little as I liked mathematics, I was impressed. I said to myself, or would have, had I had the expression, "Here is a new kind of beauty. Something different from the lifeless Academy, a beauty which combines form, action, accomplishment, law, and order."

And I have been swayed by that same beauty on seeing a huge Corliss Engine with its well-balanced form, its energy, its pre-determined motion, and above all, its power, strength, and bigness.

I have already turned from an Art Exhibition to marvel at the co-ordination and the real art of a steam shovel, ripping out great handfuls of boulders and earth, directly across the street from the still pictures and bronzes in the Fifth Avenue Studio.

I believe that few men can stand before a modern turbine and its generator, and not get some of its spirit. One must be cold indeed to pass on without a thrill or to go on one's way without connecting the builder's dreams, his travail in bringing it forth, and the satisfaction that must have been his when the steam first caught the rotor blades and the whole grand operation proceeded just as he ordained it.

Furthermore, it must be remembered that there are no accidentals in mechanicals. Undoubtedly, some of the so-called daring, or personal touches in the graphic art, are the product of chance.

Progress, I think, is a matter of elimination through evolution.

In the work of William Morris, we can see the trend toward simplification. This is continually true of machinery, in a much more marked degree, and there is a hopeful side to the lover of art. He has a strong ally in efficiency.

As machines develop, they are simplified. They become better balanced, more sightly, because only that which is useful and essential is left. Every piece which enters into the construction must have its reason for being. That is why some of our bridges are truly beautiful.

A concrete example of the movement toward the true line of beauty in machinery can be seen in the modern automobile body. You can recall the high seated, ugly, cumbersome cars of the past. Now, the tendency is toward the simple direct stream line. Taste had something to do with this, but efficiency was the real guide. It soon became evident that wind resistance demanded a new line of body, that protruding doors were dangerous, and generally inefficient. Therefore, the stream line gradually came into existence.

If you can procure some pictures of the first Corliss engines, and compare them to the present graceful type with clean cut frames, you will see the same trend.

Another hopeful sign for Art in this country, for Democracy one might say, and for real American Culture, is the advent of the Engineer. More and more trained engineers are breaking into business, social and civic lines. The day of the future will be the day of the Engineer. Fortunately, the leading institutions are not devoting all their attention to machines. Much of it is devoted to the human side. And these coming leaders will have a broader outlook on life. They will demand newer, fresher, larger themes—themes which they can comprehend and enjoy in Art and Literature, and in the working out of their relations to their Business.

There are those who believe the artist is usually a Prophet, far ahead of his time. This may be true of the truly great artist, but how often is the audience underestimated. One cannot help but believe that the Modern Drama and a good deal of Modern Literature and Art is far below the intellectual capacity of those who patronize them, because they have but little to say in the matter—and may not this be true of Art, Graphic and Plastic?

These jottings of mine are rather disjointed, but your letter seems to have opened the flood gates, and at the risk of repetition, I am handing these few lines on to you, trusting that there may be a valuable idea here or there in this script. I may be able to show you what an outsider who knows nothing about Art, and only a little about Machinery, thinks of your work.

It is a truism to say that with the factor of color eliminated, beauty consists of lines which can be followed by the eye with pleasure, and balanced masses on which the eye can rest with satisfaction, and these can be found if anywhere, on the efficient, evolved machine.

There are splendid curves in steam lines, in belts, and in all moving machinery. There is a magnificent power and attraction in the clean and steady stroke of the crosshead. Hogarth's line of beauty is rivalled by the perfect Indicator Diagram of the reciprocating engine; a Beauty which is heightened by the evidence of Efficiency, Order, and Accomplishment.

Some one has said that the average man sees in an acorn a rather useless and inedible nut, but the scientist with vision sees in it all the miracle and marvel of Nature—perhaps the same education will give to the machine its true place in Art.

Very truly yours, George W. Vos.